

MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

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MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

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Robbins, Patuxent Research Refuge,
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SPECIAL ARTICLES

HAWKS OVER MARYLAND, FALL OF 1949

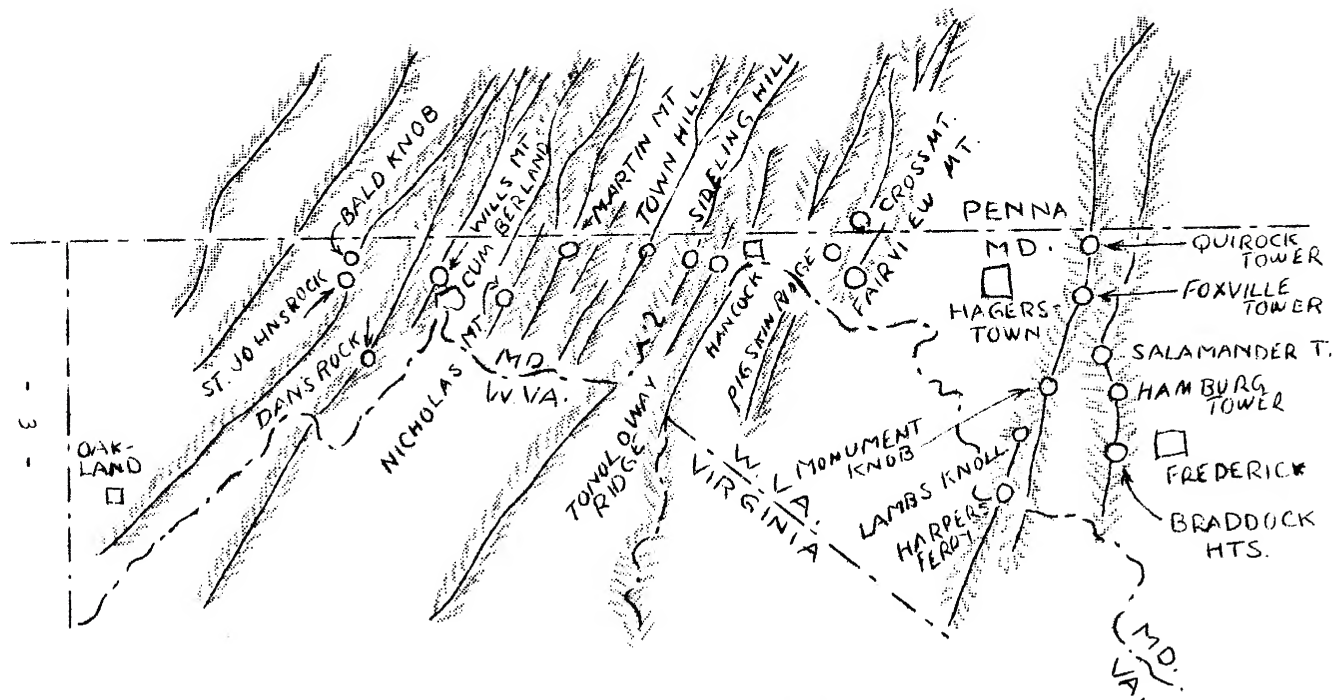
On September 17, 1949, 38 members of the Maryland Ornithological Society participated in the first large-scale observation of hawk migration through our state. Plans for this operation were laid well in advance, and observers were assigned to observation posts on nearly all of the parallel ridges which cross Maryland in Frederick, Washington, Allegany, and eastern Garrett Counties. Occasional observations had been made in previous years from Monument Knob on South Mountain, and to a very limited extent on a few of the other ridges, but up until the present study no information was at hand for most of the ridges, nor were there any comparative data for two or more ridges on the same day.

In order to cover as many observation posts as possible on this first trip, several persons inexperienced in hawk identification were asked to man posts by themselves with the understanding that a count of migrating hawks, even though unidentified as to species, would be a valuable contribution to the study. Plans were also made to give the neophytes a chance to join more experienced observers in some of the most promising locations on the following day.

All observers were asked to keep records by half-hour intervals in order that starting and stopping time of any particular flight, peak movements, and the passage of any unusual birds could be checked from one station to another. Word of the proposed study was passed along to observers in other northeastern states with a request that they keep detailed records on the same day.

The greatest gamble, of course, was the weather; but with the main flight of Broad-wings due to pass through at about that time, there was at least a fair chance that either Saturday, the 17th, or Sunday, the 18th, would be a favorable day.

Mrs Gilbert M. Miller, Dr. R. S. Stauffer, Mrs. Mabel J. Hoyler, and Miss Ruth Lenderking were most cooperative in handling registrations and observation assignments for the Allegany, Washington, Frederick, and Baltimore clubs; and the Reverend Edward S. Frey at Sterrett's Gap, Pa., and Maurice Droun at Hawk Mountain were kind enough to agree to telephone us in case a big flight should materialize before the 17th. Special thanks are due to Mr. H. C. Buckingham, the State Forester, for giving us permission to use strategically located fire towers for observation purposes. Thanks are also extended to all persons in nearby states who sent frequent notes on the progress of the hawk migration, made observations on September 17 and 18, or sent other information which was helpful in this study: Mr. and Mrs. Hervey B. Elkins (Mt. Tom, Mass.), Dr. Norman P. Hill (Cooperstown, N.Y.), Messrs. Alfred Eynon, James L. Edwards, and Floyd Wolfarth (New Jersey ridges), Dr. Irston R. Barnes (Cape Charles, Va.), Mr Max Carpenter (Reddish Knob, Va.), and Mr and Mrs. W. R. DeGarmo (Allegheny Front, W. Va.). Mr. Robert J. Beaton visited Monument Knob almost weekly from late September to early December, and obtained a fine picture of the flight through that area. Probably the most interesting area covered was Cove Point in Calvert County, where George Kelly solved one of the mysteries of Maryland hawk



MAP 1. LOCATION OF OBSERVATION POINTS IN WESTERN MARYLAND

flights by discovering where the famous Hooper's Island flight crosses Chesapeake Bay. Mr. Kelly has kindly turned over all of his notes on this flight for summarization in the present article.

The early morning of September 17 found hopeful hawk counters clinging to the cold frames of fire towers and gazing disconcertedly at the ground fog which hung over the valleys for a seemingly endless time. The wind was very light, and in all the more eastern locations seemed determined to come from a direction a bit south of west. When the fog finally began to dissipate and the first scattered accipiters were sighted moving by at treetop height, spirits heightened. For those of us in the more eastern locations, the remainder of the day brought frequent changes of mood; a spurt of excitement as a small group of birds came into sight, followed by periods of increasing apprehension as the wind freshened from the southwest or died down altogether. Then a mis-read mirror signal from another station gave renewed hope, and finally, at some time during the day there were one or two periods when nearly every observer strained his utmost to determine how many Broad-wings were contained in a distant gyrating flock. By 3:30 p. m. nearly all observers felt that the day's flight was rapidly drawing to a close, but most watchers continued to man their posts until 5 o'clock as previously arranged. More than a dozen weary but very enthusiastic hawk counters gathered at the Miller's home that evening to exchange accounts of the day's activities. Contact was made with the more distant parties by phone, and strategy for the following day was outlined.

The ridges of western Allegany County yielded consistently better flights than did those further east, due at least in part to the fact that winds in the western section were principally west to northwest while those to the east were more westerly with a tendency toward southwest. Nan Livingstone was the envy of all other observers since her location atop Lover's Leap on Will's Mountain proved the most productive by far, in spite of the fact that she was able to cover this post for only one and a half hours. The following brief summary gives the location of the various observation points, the inclusive hours of coverage (Daylight Saving Time), the total number of hawks (exclusive of vultures), the names of observers, and other pertinent data:

Bald Knob, Little Savage Mt. 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Last 5 hawks seen at 6:50 p.m. Total 108. Agatha Witte, Mary Witte.

St. Johns Rock, Big Savage Mt. (Allegheny Front), 1 mile south of U.S. Route 40. $\frac{1}{2}$ hours observation. Total 38. Myra Taylor.

Dans Rock Fire Tower (south of Vale Summit). 5 hours observation. Total approximately 250. Bill Wilson, Ray Clark.

Wills Mountain Narrows (above "Lovers Leap"). 10:10 to 11:40 a.m. Total 1216, mostly Broad-wings. Nan Livingstone.

Allegheny High School, Cumberland. 2 hours. Total 153. Bill Scott.

Nicholas Mountain. 11:40 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Total 693. James Deetz.

Martin Mountain, crest of mountain at Pennsylvania line. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Cloudless; wind light NE. Total 505. Helen B. Miller, George H. Gunnoe.

Town Hill Fire Tower, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south of U.S. Route 40. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Total 69. Mr. and Mrs. Clark G. Webster, James V. Derby.

Sideling Hill at U.S. Route 40. 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wind light, mostly W. calm about noon, some shift toward S. in p. m. Total 326. John and Martha Stauffer, joined in p. m. by Dr. and Mrs. R. S. Stauffer.

Tonoloway Ridge. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Total 2. Dr. and Mrs. R. S. Stauffer.

Pigskin Ridge. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Total 33. Seth H. Low.

Cross Mountain Fire Tower, 0.4 mile north of Maryland-Pennsylvania State line. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wind W, 12 m.p.h. at 8 a.m.; WNW, 5 m.p.h. at 10:55; shifting to SW, 5 m.p.h. at 11:15; SSW, 8 m.p.h. at 1:30; WSW, 5 m.p.h. at 1:55; S, 10 m.p.h. at 2:10. Heavy fog in valleys until 10:30; no migrating hawks seen until this time. Total 305. Chandler S. Robbins.

Fairview Mountain, at U.S. Route 40. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wind WNW to W, 10 m.p.h. all day. Total 55. Orville W. Crowder, Tirzah M. Sandy, Dorothy Rice, William McHoul.

Quirock Mountain Tower, South Mountain. 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Total 4. Mabel J. Hoyler, Rodgers Smith.

Foxville Tower, South Mountain. 9:10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fair, slight haze in early a. m. Wind W in a.m., dropping at noon, SW in p.m. Total 326. Pearl Heaps, Florence Burner.

Monument Knob, South Mountain. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunny, but haze increasing at 2:30 and very bad by 5 p.m. Wind SW to W, 10-12 m.p.h. Temperature 70° to 80°. Total 254. Madeline K. and R. D. Cole.

Lambs Knoll, northern limit of Blue Ridge Mountains. 3:55 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. Hazy. Wind SW. No migrants. Elizabeth Romsberg.

Harpers Ferry, Blue Ridge. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Total 142. M. Brooke Meanley, Anna Gilkeson.

Salamander Fire Tower, Catoctin Mountain. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wind NW, 15 m.p.h. at 10 a.m., shifting to W and diminishing at noon, increasing to 15 m.p.h. from NW at 3 p.m. Total 78. H. M. Gross, John Blowers.

Hamburg Fire Tower, Catoctin Mountain. 9:15 a.m. to 3:20 p.m. Total 74. Compton Crook, Will Strack, Frank Kaufman.

Braddock Heights, Catoctin Mountain. 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wind NW and W. Total 19. John E. Willoughby.

Mount Tom, Mass. Total 198. Mr. and Mrs. Hervey B. Elkins.

Montclair Quarry, First Watchung Ridge, N. J. 156. A. E. Eynon and others.

Sparta, Sussex County, N.J. "No indications of a flight on the 'Highland' fly-line." J. L. Edwards.

Hawk Mountain, Pa. 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Total 1035. Maurice Broun. Partial count by half-hour intervals submitted by Irston R. Barnes.

Sterrett's Gap, Blue Mountain, Pa. 9:15 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wind light W; very hazy in a.m. Total 268. Edward S. Frey.

Reddish Knob Tower, Augusta Co., Va. Elevation 4398 feet. 10:50 a.m. to 5 p.m. Haze in valleys. Temp. 65° to 70°. Total 510. Max Carpenter.

Roaring Plains, crest of the Allegheny Front, Grant-Tucker County line about 4 miles south of Stony River Dam, W. Va. Elevation 4000 feet. 11:45 a.m. to 3:50 p.m. Heavy rain the two preceding days. Total 2661. Mr. & Mrs. W. R. DeGarmo.

Table 1 summarizes the counts from all stations, separated by species wherever reliable identifications were made. Unidentified birds are listed in the next to last column under the designation "X". The great majority of unidentified birds were undoubtedly Broad-wings. The localities are arranged geographically, from west to east. The first 7 are in Allegany County or the eastern edge of Garrett County, the next 6 in western Washington County, the next 4 from north to south along South Mountain, and the next three from north to south along Catoctin Mountain. For comparison, 6 localities from other states are given at the end. There was no significant difference in species composition from one area to another.

Table 1. Hawks observed on September 17, 1949 in Maryland and nearby states

Locality	Sharp shin	Coo- pers	Red- tail	Red- shld	Br'd Rgh wing	Bld leg	Ma- Eag	Os- rsh	Duc pry	Pig Hwk	Spa eon	row	x	TOTAL
Bald Knob														108
St. Johns Rock														88
Dans Mountain														250
Wills Mountain														1216
Alleghany H. S.														153
Nicholas Mt.	2	1	2		687						1			693
Martin Mt.	7		19	16	350		2				2	109		505
Town Hill	4	4		5	40				1			15		69
Sideling Hill					322							4		326
Tonoloway Ridge					2									2
Pigskin Ridge	4		1		22							6		33
Cross Mountain	8	1	12	1	263			1	1		4	14		305
Fairview Mt.			3	12	31		1		1		4	3		55
Quirock Mt.														4
Foxville Tower	1	5	4		310	1						5		326
Monument Knob			4	1	30		1		1			217		254
Harpers Ferry	4	1	1		126	1	5		3	1				142
Salamander Tower	2	4	2	1	49				1	2	1		16	78
Hamburg Tower	21		11	2	3			2	1			34		74
Braddock Hts.	3	7		1	6				1		1			19
Maryland Total														4600
Mount Tom	33	1			115		2		4		4	39		198
Montclair	67		1	2	67		1		3		1	14		156
Hawk Mountain	10	1	2	2	705			1	3			7		739
Sterrett's Gap	22	1	1		231		2	4	1	2		3	1	268
Reddish Knob		3	2	25	510	?			2				93	636
Roaring Plains	8	7	1		2650		1	1	2		5	6		2681
Grand Total														9278

In comparing the totals of the various stations it is important to keep in mind the differences in length of coverage. St. Johns Rock on the Allegheny Front, for instance, cannot be dismissed as a poor location, since observations were made for only $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Nicholas Mountain, with the second highest count, had a fine flight in progress by the time the observer arrived, but on subsequent days remained inferior to Wills Mountain. Progressing eastward the counts on the higher ridges dropped gradually, while the lower ridges were consistently poorer than the higher ones. Unfortunately, Polish Mountain was not covered. Green Ridge was sampled briefly, but found to be less productive than adjacent Town Hill which is some 400 feet higher.

The attempt to intercept any ridge flight which might have followed Blue and Kittatinny Mountains from Hawk Mountain and Sterrett's Gap westward and southward into western Washington County was unsuccessful. Kittatinny Mountain ends abruptly 15 miles north of the Maryland line, but it was hypothesized that any flight along this ridge would either shift westward onto Cove or Tuscarora Mountain, or possibly travel 11 or 12 miles over low country to the Bear Pond Mountains which start just north of the Maryland line. The Cross Mountain fire

tower provides a commanding view of Cove Mountain just north of the Maryland line, and also overlooks the western edge of the Bear Pond Mountains. Tuscarora Mountain comes to an abrupt end just north of the Maryland line, and only very low ridges such as Pigskin Ridge lie between this and Sleep Creek Mountain south of the Potomac. Fairview Mountain, the southernmost of the Bear Pond Mountains was thought to be another likely possibility for seeing a flight through this region, but both the Pigskin and Fairview counts were very low. The summit of Cross Mountain compared favorably with the better ridges east of Allegany County, and indicated that with a favorable wind there might be a respectable flight visible from the fire tower. Most of the birds traveled along the west edge of the ridge, but a few passed directly over the fire tower, and a good many were sighted in the far distance moving south through the Bear Ponds. The hawks which migrated along Cross Mountain moved out over the low country between Fairview and Pigskin, but were not spotted by an observer who checked half a dozen likely observation points in the intervening area.

South Mountain proved to be consistently better than the more eastern peaks or ridges on Catoclin Mountain, as might be expected in view of the fact that South Mountain forms a nearly continuous ridge rising abruptly from the Hagerstown Valley, thus getting the full benefit of westerly winds. Catoclin Mountain, on the other hand, might prove the better of the two on a day with easterly winds, since it is bounded on the east by the wide, flat Frederick Valley.

The report of a Rough-legged Hawk on such an early date would normally be subject to considerable suspicion, but it was closely seen by two observers at Foxville, and later identified 24 miles further south along the same flight line at Harpers Ferry.

Table 2. Hawk counts by half-hour intervals

Time	Bald Knob	Nich Mt	Mar-tin	Town Hill	Sid Hill	Cross Mt	Fairview	Foxville	Monu Knob	Harp Py	Sala Tower	Ster Gap	Hawk Mt	Red Knob
9-9:30	--	--	5	--	--	2	--	1	--	2	--	0	--	--
9:30-10	--	--	0	--	3	0	--	2	--	--	--	2	9	--
10-10:30	17	--	0	7	22	0	0	9	11	1	0	63	10	--
10:30-11	28	--	0	28	21	10	5	11	18	--	14	--	29	3
11-11:30	0	--	50	18	38	17	1	31	17	--	16	--	26	83
11:30-12	0	142	52	2	73	72	6	85	3	3	7	87	55	124
12-12:30	0	304	0	2	32	13	5	63	4	1	1	28	16	109
12:30-1	4	109	6	0	63	11	5	0	26	1	5	--	37	94
1-1:30	25	39	259	2	15	6	0	2	8	3	1	40	35	79
1:30-2	12	36	91	1	1	2	7	110	6	--	7	--	12	104
2-2:30	1	24	36	4	1	123	10	18	7	10	11	10	7	36
2:30-3	12	9	6	3	7	33	1	1	24	--	7	--	71	3
3-3:30	0	10	0	0	11	5	1	2	96	122	6	29	102	0
3:30-4	0	--	0	1	31	7	10	1	22	--	3	--	71	0
4-4:30	4	--	0	0	4	0	2	0	9	--	0	9	250	0
4:30-5	0	0	0	1	--	2	2	0	3	--	0	--	11	0

Table 2 shows the combined total for all species by half-hour intervals at 14 selected stations. Although occasional birds were seen before 10 o'clock and after 4, the main movement all Maryland points took place between these hours. The highest half-hour count, on the other hand, occurred at any time from 10:30 a.m. (Wills Mountain, now shown in Table 2) to 4 p.m. in Maryland, and as late as 4:30 at Hawk Mountain. It is interesting to note that at no two Maryland stations was the peak flight recorded in the same half-hour interval. The figures for Foxville, Monument Knob and Harpers Ferry suggest that the flight of 110 birds noted between 1:30 and 2 at the first location was subsequently recorded at the other two stations, but the birds seen earlier in the day at Foxville seem largely to have been missed at the other points.

Table 3. Daily hawk counts in Maryland and other northeastern states.

Locality	September dates										
	10	11	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Mount Tom	52	207	198	39	96	357	765	--	13	120	--
Cooperstown	215	6	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	51
Montclair Qu.	--	--	156	13	12	222	1227	Rain	46	2222	436
Hawk Mountain	92	2717	1035	472	1039	1105	674	Rain	351	470	282
Sterretts Gap	35	--	260	--	295	--	--	--	--	310	--
Wills Mount'n	--	--	1216	66	--	--	477	--	--	--	--
Nicholas Mtn.	--	19	693	27	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Monument Knob	--	--	254	5	--	--	--	--	--	232	191
Roaring Plains	--	145	2651	--	--	--	817	6	--	14	--
Cove Point	--	--	--	--	--	--	2214	3	14	157	97
Cape Charles	170	99	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Table 3 gives a comparison of hawk flights at 4 Maryland stations with those at most of the best known observation points in other northeastern states. Days when no observations were made are indicated by dashes. The dates selected for the table were those for which the most data were available: the weekend of September 10-11, and the period from the 17th through the 25th. The peak counts for all stations included in the table were recorded during the period shown. Except for the last two areas showing the coastal flight, the localities are arranged from north to south. Underscored counts indicate that observations were made throughout the greater part of the day. The early flight at Cape Charles on September 10 is noteworthy. The maximum Hawk Mountain count on the 11th (a Sunday) was not reflected by high reports from other areas, although very few Maryland localities were patrolled on this early date. This table indicates that our choice of September 17 was indeed a lucky one, but that several other days such as the 11th, the 19th, 20th, 21st, and 24th (none of them weekends, unfortunately) might have been equally rewarding. The Montclair peak on the 24th must have gone through some part of Maryland even later. Hawk Mountain can be justly proud of its continuous fine record as compared with the sporadic high counts at other observation points.

Comparisons between Hawk Mountain and Sterrett's Gap give still further evidence that a great majority of the Hawk Mountain Broad-wings do not continue to follow the ridge, but head south over the flat country. Many of these birds probably subsequently turn up on South Mountain, but the fact that South Mountain counts have always been consistently below those of Hawk Mountain suggests that either the Hawk Mountain flight disperses, or that it has not yet been

intercepted. The records of higher counts further south in the Blue Ridge mountains of Virginia (Shenandoah National Park) stimulate Marylanders toward further investigation.

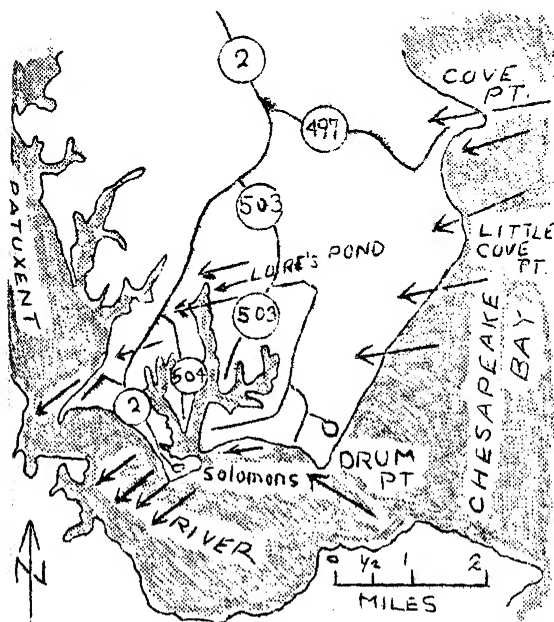
On September 18, winds were chiefly from the southwest and consequently all counts were low. No area except Monument Knob was covered for more than 4 hours. A large group of observers at Wills Mountain under the guidance of Nan Livingstone submitted the highest count of the day - 41 hawks. Dr. and Mrs. Stauffer counted 36 on Sideling Hill; Miss Lenderking, Mr. Gross and Mr. Blowers observed 36 at Foxville; James Deetz found 28 at Nicholas; Messrs. Hodgdon, Low and others counted 17 at St. Johns Rock, and Messrs. Baldwin, Taylor and DuBois identified 5 at Monument Knob.

The highest one-day hawk count ever reported for Maryland was made on September 21 at Lore's Pond just north of Solomons in Calvert County by George Kelly. After receiving word of a large flight on the previous day, Mr. Kelly stood watch from 10 to 5 and counted 2214 hawks. Eleven hundred of these were sighted at 10:25 as they passed high overhead in a single long flock. As early as 10 o'clock a flight of 96 was seen, and by 11:15 when the wind shifted from northwest to southwest, 2137 hawks had been counted. On subsequent days Mr. Kelly explored other areas between Cove Point and Solomons and also made

observations by boat offshore. He found that the hawks arrived on a broad front from Cove Point to Drum Point, traveling just south of west as they came in from over Chesapeake Bay. Observations from 16 different points indicated that there was no location from which the entire flight could be viewed.

The arrows on Map 2 show the locations where hawk flights were observed during the fall of 1949, and the direction of each flight. The length of each arrow indicates the distance through which the birds were under observation, and is not an indication of the number of birds recorded at each place.

Mr. Kelly's observations are summarized in Table 4. In addition to the birds shown on the table, many Bald Eagles and Ospreys were seen, but these two species were not counted except where they were definitely known to be migrating birds. The best flights occurred on light northwesterly or light northeasterly winds.



MAP 2. LOCATION OF HAWK FLIGHTS
RECORDED IN THE COVE POINT AREA
BY GEORGE KELLY.

Table 4. Summary of observations in the Cove Point area by George Kelly

Date	September							October		
	21	22	23	24	25	26	30	4	13	21
Hrs. of observation	7	$\frac{1}{4}$	1	$4\frac{1}{2}$	$4\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	$3\frac{1}{4}$
Sharp-shinned Hawk	27	2	12	19	37	3		1	5	5
Cooper's Hawk	1	1		2	2	1			2	1
Red-tailed Hawk	1				1				1	
Broad-winged Hawk	2169			130	25			31		
Bald Eagle	2				4				1	
Marsh Hawk	4				6	2	1			1
Osprey	1				2					1
Duck Hawk										
Pigeon Hawk				1		1		1		
Sparrow Hawk	9		1	5	13		3			
unident. falcon			1		6					
other unidentified					1					
Total	2214	3	14	157	97	7	4	33	9	8

Robert J. Beaton and others made frequent weekend trips to Monument Knob on South Mountain, and identified from 50 to 100 hawks per day during the first three weekends of October, about 25 to 50 per day in November, and a few scattered birds including a Rough-legged Hawk and a Golden Eagle on December 3. Other Golden Eagles were recorded on October 16 and November 11. Some of Mr. Beaton's figures were published in "Birds of the Season" in the November-December and January-February issues of The Wood Thrush; he will publish a more comprehensive report at the conclusion of his 1950 studies.

The results of the present cooperative study have been most encouraging, and all who participated are eager to continue it in future years. We have learned that Broad-wings follow nearly all of the higher ridges in substantial numbers, but it will take several more cooperative ventures before we know which ridges are consistently best, and which have the largest flights under various wind conditions. It is quite possible that on a northeast or a southeast wind the hawk migration pattern would be quite different from that which occurs under the influence of winds from the west or northwest. We have much to learn about the relative abundance of the various species on the different flight lines, and about the exact routes taken by the birds which pass by our observation points. We still know virtually nothing about where the Hawk Mountain birds cross our State, and we have exceedingly little information on the spring migration. Mr. Kelly's Cove Point observations stimulate renewed interest in the coastal flight which presumably passes almost unnoticed over the Ocean City area, continues southward to Cape Charles at the mouth of the Chesapeake, then (at least in part) turns northward and follows the eastern shore of Chesapeake Bay north to Hooper's Island, crosses the bay to Cove Point on the western side, then moves across the lower Patuxent River and continues in an unknown course through St. Marys County and across the Potomac River. Somewhere along this long and circuitous route there are most probably some excellent concentration points yet to be discovered.

As Mr. James L. Edwards suggests, the Broad-winged Hawk has a marked tendency to travel long distance over flat country, and to shift from one ridge to another. It is quite possible that cooperative observations at the peak of the Sharp-shinned and Red-tail flight in middle or late October may furnish better results on the reliability of the various ridges than does the Broad-winged flight. Consequently the week-ends of September 16-17 and October 21-22 will be set aside for statewide participation in hawk counts. We shall plan the most intensive coverage for Saturday, but hold Sunday as an alternative in case of bad weather. As a result of the 1949 discoveries it is expected that several of the more promising locations will be visited on many other dates by individual members or small groups. If accurate counts and other pertinent data are mailed promptly to the local field trip chairman, this information will be available to other members who may wish to make hawk observations during the fall migration, and it will also contribute to our increasing knowledge of hawk flights over the State as a whole.

Chandler S. Robbins

ANNE ARUNDEL BIRD CLUB ORGANIZED

The sixth Local Unit of the Society came into being Tuesday night, February 7, when the Anne Arundel Bird Club was formally organized in a meeting at the Club House on Gibson Island. Plans had been well laid in advance by interested people of Gibson Island, under the leadership of Col. and Mrs. W. H. Vinup. It was decided at the outset that the club be county-wide in scope, and that it be organized under the constitution of the State Society as a local unit.

At the initial meeting, State President Orville Crowder spoke on birding activities in Maryland, and the organizational structure of the Ornithological Society. Officers were chosen - Col. Vinup as President, Lt. Comdr. Wm. H. Berry as Vice President, Mrs. John M. Hodges as Secretary-Treasurer. A preliminary draft of by-laws was at hand, and was referred to Judge Henderson, as By-laws Committee Chairman, for subsequent report.

As most of the initial membership reside at Gibson Island, meetings will be held there for the present. Later on, it is hoped that meetings may be alternated between Gibson Island and Annapolis.

HARFORD COUNTY CLUB DEVELOPING FAST

Although only three months old, the Harford County unit of the Society is already a lusty infant, with a membership now past the 50 mark.

On November 14 the club presented its first paid-admission lecture - a talk on Eagle Banding by Charles A. Broley, the famous "Eagle Man" of Canada and Florida. Mr. Broley won an instant place in the hearts of club members, and the sizable audience at the Bel Air High School auditorium spent a delightful evening.

An enthusiastic planning committee met in November at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Wm. W. Finney at Churchville. By-laws were agreed upon, tying in with the constitution of the State Society, and program plans for the coming months were worked out. At the February monthly meeting, the by-laws were formally adopted, and the first of a series of four talks on Basic Ornithology was presented by Orville Crowder.

THE SEASON

November and December, 1949

The months of November and December, particularly the latter, were abnormally warm throughout the State. Furthermore, the occasional spells of hard freezing weather which we usually expect at intervals throughout these months were uniformly mild. On only two nights in the entire period did the temperature fall below 26° at Washington, and even then the minimum was 21°. Under such conditions the later migrants tend to remain north of their regular winter range, but the response of the various species differs from year to year, so it is not possible to predict in advance just which species will be particularly abundant in Maryland in any given winter.

Last year, Pipits, Robins and Ruby-crowned Kinglets were most conspicuously affected by the warm winter. This year the above species were only slightly above their normal wintering numbers in our State, but the Field Sparrow was noticeably abundant everywhere except on the Allegheny Plateau. Once again the presence of some erratic northern visitors reminded us that even in the warmest winters it is not unusual to have flights of northern birds. Such visitations are governed more by food supply in the far north than by current weather conditions.

Since the Christmas Counts will be written up in detail in the next issue, the present report will be concerned largely with other records which have been submitted during the period.

Hérons, Gannet. Interesting late reports of herons included 5 American Egrets in Otter Point Creek on Nov. 5 (Harford Co. field trip), a Green Heron near the Choptank River bridge on Nov. 13 (Etta Wedge and others), and 2 or 3 American Bitterns in the Elliott Island marshes throughout the period (Robert Stewart). Gannets were constantly in sight along the Maryland coast on Nov. 12, and were moving southward at the rate of about 50 per hour (Baltimore Club trip).

Waterfowl. There were several reports of Blue and Snow Geese (see Nov. 11-13 field trip report) from the Eastern Shore. Gadwalls were especially numerous at Savannah Lake, where Ted Hake counted over 400 on Nov. 5. A few Shovellers were found in the Elliott Island marshes as usual, and Commander Berry and Arthur Wright found 7 at Sandy Point on Dec. 31. Redheads are comparatively scarce away from tide water, but were recorded more frequently than usual at Patuxent Refuge. Single birds were discovered on Druid Lake in Baltimore on Nov. 9 and 11 by Pearl Heaps, and 2 were found at the Marshall Dierksen State Game Refuge at Pennyfield on Nov. 24 by Robert Beaton. Up to 45 Ring-necked Ducks were recorded in the latter area on Nov. 27

by Shirley Briggs. A flock of American Golden-eyes at Duck Island Cove, 1 mile south of Elliott, contained an estimated 250 birds on Nov. 18, 1000 on Nov. 29, and a maximum of 1500 on Dec. 10 (Stewart). Miss Heaps found 3 Buffle-heads on Druid Lake as early as Oct. 30, and recorded from 3 to 6 individuals there fairly regularly through Dec. 5. She also had small numbers of Ruddy Ducks from Oct. 3 through Dec. 4. Haven Kolb saw 3 of the latter species at Loch Raven on Nov. 26 -- his first record in that locality.

Vultures and Hawks. Miss Briggs recorded as many as 25 Black Vultures at Pennyfield (Seneca) on Nov. 27, and Robert Beaton saw from 4 to 6 at Monument Knob on South Mountain between Nov. 11 and Dec. 3. The northernmost record for the period was a group of 3 found at Middle River, Baltimore County, on Nov. 20 by Edwin Willis. The more interesting hawk records have been included in the feature article of this issue.

Shorebirds, Gulls and Terns. Most species of shorebirds normally leave Maryland for the south in September or October, but this year many species remained later than usual and some established new late records. A Semipalmated Plover found at Elliott Island by Robert Stewart on Nov. 30, is the latest on record for the State. The same observer noted 2 Black-bellied Plover in that area as late as Dec. 9. Although the Black-belly winters regularly in small numbers along the Maryland coast, the above date is the latest for Chesapeake Bay. Robbins, Low, and other participants in the Baltimore Club trip to Ocean City and Blackwater Refuge established late records for the White-rumped Sandpiper in the former locality on Nov. 12, and for the Spotted Sandpiper at Blackwater on the 13th. The same party found a Dowitcher and 3 Lesser Yellow-legs at Kent Narrows on Nov. 11, and a flock of 8 Dowitchers at Blackwater on the 13th. Also on the 13th, Commander Berry and Arthur Wright observed 11 Dowitchers at Sandy Point; this is the latest record for the western shore of Chesapeake Bay. Other late shorebird records were a Pectoral Sandpiper on Nov. 10 (Robbins) and a Greater Yellow-legs on the 20th (Stewart), both at Patuxent Refuge. The latter species winters regularly in small numbers on the lower Eastern Shore, but had not previously been recorded at such a late date west of the Chesapeake. Mrs. F.H. Vinup observed 2 Black-backed Gulls at Gibson Island on Dec. 26; there are few other records north of Sandy Point and Kent Island, but this species should be watched for throughout the tidal areas of the State. Three Royal Terns were still present at Ocean City, Nov. 12 (Baltimore Club trip).

Snowy Owl. One of the highlights of the period was the relatively large number of reports of the Snowy Owl. Small numbers of this arctic species migrate southward to the latitude of Maryland or Pennsylvania at intervals of approximately four years, corresponding to the cyclic changes in abundance of the lemming in the far north. Although the present incursion may not be the largest to have taken place in Maryland, it is furnishing more definite records than any previous year. November or December records were received from 11 Maryland counties as follows: Allegany Co.: 1 was shot about Dec. 6 on Piney Mt. by Jack and George Booth of Barreilville; Washington Co.: 1 was shot at Hagerstown Municipal Airport on Dec. 8 by George Dublin-

sky, after being present for about a week; another was seen in Hagerstown on Dec. 13 and shot on the following day by Donald Dundas; Frederick Co.: 1 was reported to the Game and Inland Fish Commission; Baltimore Co.: The first Maryland record of the season was a bird photographed at the home of Raymond D. Bergin in Baltimore City on Nov. 21; Hervey Brackbill reported that 4 birds from Baltimore County were brought to Baltimore taxidermists between Dec. 6 and 18; Montgomery Co.: 1 was seen near Seneca on Nov. 27 by Alva Nye; another was observed at Brookmont on Dec. 31 by Philip A. DuMont; Prince Georges Co.: 1 was seen on Dec. 5 at Clinton by Malcolm Davis; Mr. Brackbill reported that one which was killed in this county was taken to a Baltimore taxidermist between Dec. 6 and 18; still another was captured in Greenbelt; Anne Arundel Co.: 1 was seen at Gibson Island on Dec. 31 by Mrs. F. H. Vinup; Kent Co.: Brackbill reported that one bird was brought to a Baltimore taxidermist; Caroline Co.: Robert Wood saw one at Greensboro on Nov. 25; Dorchester Co.: 1 was seen at Blackwater Refuge on Dec. 10 and 11 by Steele Webster and T. H. Cunningham; Worcester Co.: Thomas Donnelly found one north of Ocean City on Dec. 27, and it was seen again on the following day by John Willoughby and Edwin Davis.

Mourning Dove, Phoebe, Barn Swallow. A flock of 75 Mourning Doves at Laytonsville on Dec. 17 (Low) is an unusual Piedmont concentration for that late date. Ruth Strosnider found a late Phoebe at Pennyfield on Dec. 10, and on the 17th, single birds were seen at Cabin John (Clara Schoenbauer, Ada M. Smith) and at Gibson Island (Mrs. F. H. Vinup). Although Phoebes winter regularly in Worcester County and irregularly in Charles County, the fall migration is usually terminated by the first week in November. Only in a season with uniformly mild temperatures could one expect so many exceptionally late records of this insect-eating bird. Brooke Meanley observed a late Barn Swallow at Ocean City on Nov. 6.

Raven, Catbird. Robert Beaton recorded 3 more Ravens from Monument Knob, South Mountain, on Nov. 26. This species apparently occurs east of Allegany County more frequently than has been generally supposed. Late Catbirds were seen at Chalk Point on Nov. 1 (E.J. Besson), Baltimore on Nov. 16 (Willis), and Patuxent Refuge on Nov. 20 (Meanley and Stewart) but the number of wintering birds in southern Maryland and the lower Eastern Shore was not above normal.

Warblers. One of the rarest of Maryland warblers, the Orange-crowned, appeared at the feeding station of Richard Cole in Towson just prior to Dec. 8, and remained several days. Brooke Meanley established the first Eastern Shore record of the Nashville Warbler on Nov. 6, when he and members of the D. C. Audubon Society observed a very late migrant at close range at Ocean City. Other late stragglers included a Black-poll Warbler at Willards on the Baltimore Club trip of Nov. 12 (Robbins), a Yellow Palm Warbler at Unity from Nov. 25 to the end of the period (Low), an Oven-bird at Baltimore on Nov. 8 (Willis), a Northern Water-thrush at Solomons on Dec. 12 (George Kelly), and a Yellow-throat at College Park on Nov. 13 (Meanley).

Baltimore Oriole. A Baltimore Oriole, which was studied at leisure in the Pocomoke Swamp at Willards by all participants on the Nov. 12 trip, is the latest on record for the State of Maryland.

Finches and Sparrows. Once more Evening Grosbeaks moved south into Maryland in small numbers. The first flock of 8 was seen at Patuxent Refuge on Nov. 19 by Robbins and Llewellyn. The Pine Siskin flight was smaller than usual, and few birds remained through December. Edwin Willis noticed that Towhees were comparatively scarce in the Middle River area in November; he saw his last bird on Nov. 24. Meanley and Charles O. Handley, Jr., recorded a tremendous flight of White-crowned Sparrows in the Frederick Valley on Oct. 29, and Meanley found 50 still present at Doubs as late as Nov. 11. The only Snow Bunting to be reported was a single bird discovered on Dec. 7 at Gibson Island by Mrs. Vinup.

Chandler S. Robbins

EASTERN SHORE FIELD TRIP: NOVEMBER 11-13

The Baltimore Club, led by Chandler Robbins had 3 satisfying days of continuous birding in a leisurely but thorough manner. Seven Wilson's Snipe, 3 Greater Yellow-legs and a Dowitcher at Kent Narrows were the forerunners of a long list of shorebirds. An American Egret was a late record for Bombay Hook Refuge and, in addition, there were 1 American Bittern, 50 Gadwall and several Hooded Mergansers. The spray-splashed rocks at the Indian River Inlet, Delaware, produced 8 Purple Sandpipers and along the Maryland coast there were 3 Royal Terns and 50 Gannets, in addition to Common and Red-throated Loons, Double-crested Cormorants, and an interesting assortment of ducks.

On Nov. 13 approaching Vienna at the Nanticoke River one Blue Goose was standing on the edge of the road. Savannah Lake was plentifully sprinkled with Whistling Swan, Canada Geese and Baldpate, and at Elliott Island Shovellers, a Virginia Rail and a Migrant Shrike were recorded. Ten Brown-headed Nuthatches were observed working on the cones of the loblolly pines. Eight belated Dowitchers were probing in the mud at the Blackwater Wildlife Refuge. The commonest duck in this area was the Baldpate. One thousand Canada Geese, 250 Green-winged Teal, 3 Hooded Mergansers, and 1 Spotted Sandpiper were observed. The latter was an additional late record for Maryland. Eleven people participated and the total number of species observed was 113.

Lorina M. Wendt